

InStep

A NEWSLETTER FOR ROLE MODELS

OCT - 4 1991

Stepping into a New School Year

How do you like the new look of *InStep*? It's just one of our new Stepping Stones initiatives at the Alberta Women's Secretariat.

The start of the 1991-92 school year coincides with the introduction of an exciting Stepping Stones video. This upbeat, 21-minute video will enable us to take the program "on the road," so to speak. It will be of particular benefit to communities which do not have a Role Model Registry or have a limited number of role models. Teachers are being encouraged to use the video on its own or as a supplement to live classroom presentations.

Entitled *Explore Your Options*, the video features four Stepping Stones role models answering student questions about their job, education, and how they combine work with other personal commitments. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the four women, and their employers, for agreeing to be featured in the video: Sara Ebert, an environmental microbiologist, University of Alberta; Janet From, an electrician, Edmonton Power; Dr. Mary Fairhurst, an analytical chemist, Dow Chemical; and Charlaine Pare, a biomedical equipment technologist, U of A Hospitals. Look inside this newsletter for more details about the video.

An additional Stepping Stones resource developed over the summer by the Women's Secretariat is a series of Role Model Profiles highlighting occupations in which females are under-represented. Developed in sets of 10, each "Profile" gives a job overview, and spotlights a Stepping Stones role model who pursues this

occupation. The Role Model Profiles will be distributed during Careers Week in November.

Encouraging young people to "Explore Your Options" by offering real life examples of Alberta woman who pursue non-traditional occupations is what our Stepping Stones role model program is all about. Keep up the good work!



Elaine McCoy, Q.C.
Minister Responsible for
Women's Issues

Did You Know?

Canadian women have been entering occupations considered non-traditional for their gender since the late 1800s. Here are some Canadian women's firsts.

1870: First two women are employed by the federal public service.

1880: Dr. Emily Stowe becomes the first Canadian woman to practice medicine in Canada, beginning in 1867. (Was registered as a member of the Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on July 16, 1880.)

1891: Leading occupations for women in 1891 were: servant (41% of employed women), dressmaker, teacher, farmer, seamstress, tailoress, saleswoman, housekeeper, laundress and milliner.

1893: Josephine Wells is the first woman to graduate in dentistry, from the Ontario College of Dental Surgeons. She entered the profession in order to support her ailing husband.

1897: Clara Brett Martin is admitted to the bar as Canada's first female lawyer (Ontario).

1898: Kit Coleman becomes the first Canadian woman to serve as a war correspondent covering the Spanish-American war for a Toronto paper.

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Stepping Stones Progress Report:

Expansion area schools eager to try out program

Teachers from all over Alberta are clamouring to use Stepping Stones.

In a survey of over 100 schools in smaller urban and rural centres, approximately 95 per cent of teachers indicated they would find the program useful.

Teachers say the program will help to break open old stereotypes that restrict career choices, particularly for young women.

"Girls are getting more interested in doing the jobs traditionally done by men. The girls are interested in engineering, and instrumentation. Their interest is working outdoors on a job site and wearing the hardhat — not sitting behind a desk in the office," said Steve Gokiart, a CALM 20 teacher at Spruce Grove Composite High School.

Carol Steen, principal and CALM coordinator at Allan Watson School in Lethbridge, concurs. "I think it (Stepping Stones) is an excellent program. The concept is good. We tend to believe young people are becoming more aware of the options open to them, but we have to continue to make them more aware."

Available in Calgary and Edmonton since 1989, the Stepping Stones role model program was expanded to an additional 21 communities across Alberta in 1991.

Role models in the expansion areas can expect to attend more career day and classroom presentations, beginning in September. The majority of the teachers contacted said they were unable to accommodate the program last spring; however, most were eager to try out Stepping Stones during the 1991-92 school year.

Teachers agreed that young women need more visible career role models and that women who achieve in non-traditional occupations have something important to share. Stepping Stones maintains that inspiration by example is a powerful method of teaching. People who demonstrate imagination, skill and perseverance always have something to teach.

Says John Witschen, the CALM 20 coordinator at St. Joseph Catholic High

School in Grande Prairie, "We are closely examining a mentorship program for gifted students and are looking for anything that could be a resource for this program."

"I think it (Stepping Stones) is a good program," echoed Sharon Brade, a Grade Eight health teacher at Parkside School in Redcliff. "My students' occupational interests range from hairdresser to veterinarian. I think the best learning is by example. It's good to have the role models come into the classroom."

The teachers in our survey also proffered a number of suggestions and concerns about Stepping Stones. Some teachers asked about the possible addition of males working in non-traditional occupations (e.g., male hairdresser, male nurse) to give a more "balanced" point of view. They feared that the boys in their class may be intimidated by role models who were exclusively female.

"We're junior high. We're working hard just to be sure everyone feels good about each other and themselves. The girls already outshine boys in many areas at this age," said Ben Cej, the principal of St. Thomas Aquinas School in Red Deer.

It is important to note that Stepping Stones addresses a specific and

important concern: the underrepresentation of women in a wide range of jobs. Stepping Stones program resources are used to address this specific issue. However, teachers are encouraged to use other resources in their communities to help students explore non-traditional careers for men.

Not all students are aiming for a university education, asserted their teachers, and more occupational role models who work in trade and technical areas are being searched out.

Says Del Peterson, a CALM 20 teacher at Winston Churchill High School in Lethbridge, "We require more women (role models) working in non-traditional jobs that do not require university, jobs that kids can actually get if they choose not to go to university. A lot of the jobs presented may only appeal to 10 per cent of the students who will attend university. Lawyer, doctor, pilot are jobs that are out of reach for most people," she explained.

Additional role models, in general, are also needed in these centres: Medicine Hat, Lloydminster, Rocky Mountain House, Wetaskiwin and Grande Prairie. Please forward the names of potential role models to the Provincial Stepping Stones Coordinator, Alberta Women's Secretariat, 8th Floor, Kensington Place, 10011 - 109 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3S8. Phone: 422-4927.



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Science Needs Women

"Fundamentally, women should have choices — lots of them," asserts the assistant chair of the University of Alberta's chemistry department.

As vice-chair of the Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST) at the University of Alberta, Chemistry Professor Dr. Margaret Ann Armour has urged hundreds of bright, young women to choose a non-traditional career in science or engineering.

WISEST has been an initiative at the University of Alberta since 1982. The WISEST mandate is to increase the proportion of women in decision-making roles in all fields of scholarship. Since women are greatly under-represented in sciences and engineering, most WISEST activities focus on these fields.

"The real problem is that women go into science, but they don't stay there," explains Dr. Armour. "We have to work on that, because that's where university staff comes from."

The bright young women who obtain a bachelor of science degree often choose to go into what might be called more nurturing occupations such as teaching, nursing, or child care, rather than choosing a career in science or engineering, says Dr. Armour.

"To be a scientist in industry or in university, you really need some kind of graduate training, either a masters or a Ph.D.," she adds. "If you leave after a B.Sc., most of the work that you will do would be of a thoroughly routine nature; you would be more of a technician."

WISEST founded the University of Alberta Women in Sciences and Engineering (UAYs) to support women undergraduates, graduate students and staff. UAYs helps students set and attain their goals. Regular meetings, newsletters and panel discussions are organized through the UAYs program. A buddy system has been set up, where undergraduates with specific questions about a course are put in touch with people who have recently completed the course.

"It's an information group, but it's

also a mutual support group," says Dr. Armour. The second year student who is finding a particular course very tough often finds it a great help to meet a fourth year student who also had difficulty with the course but made it through.

"As women, we tend to think everybody else must be doing well in this, what's wrong with me? And then you find out that there are a lot of people who have the same kinds of problems and you know that it's not just you," she adds.

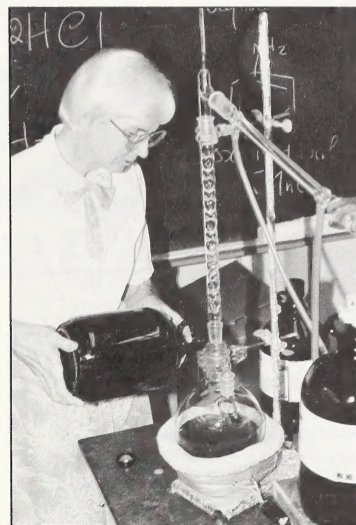
Another WISEST program involves inviting female and male Grade 11 students to the university for a six-week research project over the summer. The girls work in the faculties of science and engineering and the boys in the faculties of home economics and nursing. The response to this initiative has been positive and has resulted in several girls choosing engineering and sciences as fields of post-secondary study.

Dr. Armour says the program also familiarizes students with the university so when they become undergraduates, they don't feel university is a strange place where they don't know anybody.

"They'll know at least one professor and they'll often feel that there's somebody they can go and talk to and there's somewhere where they can hang their hat," she says. "We sense that the boys learn a great deal from the program as well. Their reaction usually is that they hadn't realized that clothing and textiles is so scientific or that nursing uses computers so much, so it opens their eyes a bit too."

WISEST advocates making full use of Alberta's most important resource — our brainpower — for women as well as men. Encouraging women to enter occupations requiring technical training also follows the conventional wisdom that there will be a global shortage of technically trained people in five years' time, adds Dr. Armour, who was a recipient of an Edmonton YWCA Tribute to Women Award in 1990, in the professional and technology category.

An expert on the safe disposal and



Dr. Margaret Ann Armour challenges young women to succeed in science and engineering fields.

recycling of hazardous chemicals, Dr. Armour says one of the main reasons she became involved with WISEST is because she strongly believes that "science needs women."

"Because in fact there are different ways of doing things, there are different points of view, different approaches, different questions to be answered and at the moment we're missing a large social group which perhaps would ask questions differently. That's the reason that keeps me involved," she explains.

WISEST has hosted several national conferences, and holds frequent local conferences and plenary sessions. A member of WISEST compiled a "Bibliography on Women in Pure and Applied Sciences," which contains close to 3,000 entries and is maintained on the U of A computer data base and is available to the public.

WISEST receives financial support from several provincial, federal and private agencies including the Alberta Women's Secretariat.

WISEST welcomes suggestions and enquiries from interested people. For further information, contact WISEST, Department of Chemistry, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2G2, or phone: 492-4969.

New Stepping Stones video explores career options

What do a chemist, an electrician, a biomedical equipment technologist, and an environmental microbiologist have in common? All four occupations belong to Alberta women who are profiled in an exciting video being launched this month through the provincial government's Stepping Stones role model program.

"Young women, you can succeed in whatever you choose to do. The world is your oyster, too." This is the message being delivered to Alberta teens through *Explore Your Options*, the title of a new video produced by the Alberta Women's Secretariat.

The upbeat, 21-minute video has been approved as a support learning resource by Alberta Education. Distribution of the video is now underway and each junior and senior high schools in Alberta will receive one copy of the VHS tape.

Explore Your Options follows a group of high school students on a class project as they interview four women who work in occupations which are non-traditional for their

gender and learn how they achieved their career goals. A teacher's guide comes with the video.

The video spotlights four Alberta women: Sara Ebert, an environmental microbiologist with the University of Alberta; Dr. Mary Fairhurst, a chemist with Dow Chemical Canada Inc.; Janet From, an electrician with Edmonton Power; and Charlene Pare, a biomedical equipment technologist with the University of Alberta Hospital. Watch for profiles of the women in an upcoming issue of *InStep*.

Women's Secretariat personnel involved in the production of *Explore Your Options*, are happy with the final product and the valuable dialogue it is sure to initiate among Alberta youth.

"If it makes young people think, if even 10 young women out there realize they can do whatever they set their hearts on and enter a more rewarding career as a result of viewing this video, it's been worthwhile," sums up Beckie Garber-Conrad, Provincial Coordinator of the Stepping Stones role model program.



Students join environmental microbiologist Sara Ebert in her lab at the University of Alberta, during the recent filming of a new Stepping Stones video.

Did You Know?

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1912: Carrie Derick, a scientist, becomes Canada's first female full professor (McGill University).

1913: Alys Bryant is the first Canadian woman to pilot an aircraft in Canada. Following take-off at Vancouver, B.C., her faultless exhibition flight lasted 16 minutes.

1915: Elizabeth Smellie is the first woman to become a Colonel in the Canadian Army. A nurse, she became head of the Canadian Army Nursing Corps.

1916: (July 1) Emily Murphy and Alice Jamieson, in Edmonton and Calgary, respectively, are the first women in the British Empire to be appointed police magistrates. The appointments, by the Alberta government, followed requests from women's organizations that women hear women's cases.

1917: Helen G. MacGill is the first Canadian woman to become a judge; she was appointed to juvenile court in Vancouver, B.C., a post she held for 28 years.

Continued next month . . .



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We invite your comments, suggestions and story ideas.

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